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RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9434  
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RHHJJPI/PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 06 NEW DELHI 001295

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/07/2017  
TAGS: [PTER](#) [CVIS](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [MOPS](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#)  
PK, IN  
SUBJECT: KASHMIRI REJECTIONIST HARDLINER GEELANI SEEKS U.S.  
VISA

REF: A. SCA-DESK EMAIL 03/08/2007 REGARDING FAI  
CONFERENCE PLANS  
[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 513

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Classified By: A/DCM Peter Kaestner, Reason 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. This is an ACTION REQUEST for CA, S/CT, DS, PA, SCA and others. Please see paragraphs 15 and 16.

[1](#)2. (S) SUMMARY: Hardline Kashmiri separatist leader Sayeed Ali Shah Geelani applied March 16 for a visa to travel to the United States for medical treatment for cancer in his one remaining kidney. Geelani has longstanding ties to terrorist group Hizbul Mujahideen through his political activity with Indian Kashmir, s Jamaat Islami party, and may have been responsible indirectly for the assassinations of moderate Kashmiris. We need Washington guidance as to whether or not to issue him a visa (see septel for VISAS DONKEY message). We also need a PD strategy that rebuts Geelani's own press attacks on us, which have already started. While there may be some blowback here among Kashmiri hardliners if we reject the visa, Geelani's views and message are incompatible with the values of the American people, law, and government. The optimal outcome may be for the Department to facilitate Geelani's care elsewhere, perhaps Singapore. If we reject his visa, there are likely to be security and political

repercussions for us in the Kashmir Valley and possibly elsewhere. END SUMMARY.

#### Seeking Medical Care from the Great Satan

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13. (S) Sayeed Ali Shah Geelani is a rigidly uncompromising Kashmiri separatist who has taken pride in being an outspoken advocate for violence and terrorism for many years. Rejecting even President Musharraf's proposals, he has vowed to go to his grave without compromising on his insistence on Kashmir's independence or accession to Pakistan. In doing so, he has undermined the Indo-Pak peace process and the moderate Mirwaiz Hurriyat. He is also a sharply polarizing figure in the Kashmir Valley. Geelani's doctors say he has approximately one year to live due to kidney cancer. Geelani told Deputy CG that the quality of medical care and treatment in the U.S. is superior, and that the Barberton, Ohio Community Hospital has a comprehensive cancer care program. If he receives a visa for medical treatment in the U.S., we understand he is likely to engage in political activity in Washington if he gets a visa (Ref A), although he claimed in his visa interview there is no political agenda for his trip. He may use that opportunity to denounce Indo-Pak peace efforts.

#### Setting Us Up

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14. (S) Geelani began the process of applying for a U.S. visa on March 12th, requesting our POL FSN's help to file paperwork with the Consular Section. He applied formally for the visa on Friday, March 16. Geelani asked that he be allowed to travel to Ohio for laser treatment of cancer in

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his remaining kidney. Due to his rigid hardline views and well-known ties to Pakistan-based terrorist group Hizbul Mujahideen, the Indian government has previously restricted his travel, granting him a passport only twice to go on the Hajj since 1981, when he visited the U.S. Nonetheless, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh personally intervened to issue him a passport for one year to permit him to seek medical treatment abroad. In issuing Geelani a passport, the Supreme Court ordered that he refrain from participating in political activity if he were to go to the U.S. Kashmiri leaders in the past, however, have taken little notice of this admonition (and escaped punishment), and we hear he has been invited to speak at a conference being arranged in Washington on March 28th by separatists (Ref A). In the period between March 12 and his visa interview March 16, his spokesman attacked us in the press for telling Geelani's son that a visa decision could take some time and might have to be made in Washington, leading us to believe he set us up to look bad no matter what we decide.

#### Everyone's Clammed Up

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15. (S) India's political leaders have remained relatively silent in response to the Prime Minister's intervention in this case, including the opposition. Mirwaiz Omar Farooq has also, tellingly, been silent, despite indications (Ref A) that he would weigh-in on Geelani's behalf. When we met Mirwaiz in February, he said it would be a big mistake for the GOI to issue Geelani a passport to travel, because he would stir up trouble. A former Indian RAW Chief told us that Geelani must not be permitted to engage in political activities in the U.S. When we explained his First Amendment rights were he to travel to the U.S., we were urged to tell Geelani to "lump it" because the PM's decision did not/not envision Geelani engaging in such activities. When we tried to raise the matter with PMO, we were hurriedly told this was a matter of extreme sensitivity that we should raise with MEA. MEA told us that their Embassy in Washington had heard of the possible March 28 conference organized by Ghulam Nabi

Fai, and took a very dim view of it and Geelani's possible participation. They promised a considered opinion ASAP, but we have not heard from them and doubt we ever will. NN Vohra, the senior Kashmir-watcher at the Home Ministry, similarly would not be drawn when asked for his opinion. Clearly, this is a hot potato.

Do Unto Others...

16. (S) Our Senior POL FSN tells us that, in the South Asian cultural context, all of a dying man's evil deeds should be forgotten so he can receive the care he is asking for. That the RSS and BJP did not attack the PM for giving Geelani a passport is a reflection of that cultural attitude. It is possible that some here will accuse the U.S. of standing in the way of his medical care, ignoring the fact that Geelani seeks to visit a community hospital in Barberton, Ohio and that medical care is available closer by in India itself, Singapore, Dubai, or Europe. Denying his visa, they say,

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will give him yet another platform to denounce the United States as he dies as a "martyr" for the Kashmir cause. They also ask why we have granted Yasin Malik, who is known to have killed several people during his "freedom fighter" days, a passport for less urgent medical treatment, when Geelani has never killed anyone with his own hands. (Answer: Because Yasin Malik has become a proponent of peace. Geelani has not and likely never will.) Ironically, Yasin Malik alone among the separatists contacted Senior Pol FSN to advocate for Geelani to get a medical visa, arguing that the Muslim community in the Kashmir Valley will respond positively to this kind of gesture.

An Ardent Extremist with Ties to Terrorism

17. (S) The counter-argument is far more compelling. Pre-eminent terrorist expert Dr. Ajai Sahni gave us a long dossier of accusations against Geelani, including financing Hizbul Mujahideen and other terrorist groups through hawala channels, money laundering, openly advocating violence, and ordering the assassination of several political opponents (emailed to SCA and SCT). Although we have no evidence of his having ever been convicted in India of any crime, Geelani has been jailed multiple times in India for financing terrorism and inciting violence, including from 1965 to 1966, 1990 to 1992, and in 2002 until he was released on humanitarian grounds to receive medical treatment in Mumbai during his first bout with cancer. Geelani is known to be a close associate of Hizbul Mujahideen leader Syed Salahuddin, and press reports say that he is the more conservative of the two, pressuring Salahuddin not to declare a cease-fire or open talks with India even though the Indians have been courting the Hizbul leader for some time.

Blood On His Hands

18. (S) More disturbingly, Geelani has a brutal reputation among Kashmiri separatists. Both Sajjad and Bilal Lone have openly accused Geelani of ordering the assassination of their father, Abdul Ghani Lone in 2002, after Lone traveled to Pakistan to renounce violence and signaled his interest in running for office in Indian Kashmiri elections. Mirwaiz Omar Farooq also blames Geelani for ordering the death of his father, Mirwaiz Muhammad Farooq in 1990. Geelani also denounced Mirwaiz Omar Farooq's recent trip to Pakistan, holding a strike in protest of his trip, and sending ominous signals that Mirwaiz's life could also be in jeopardy in the coming months (Ref B).

No Apostle of Peace

¶9. (S) Geelani has been an outspoken opponent of compromising with India to attain a peace agreement with Pakistan. Jammu correspondent for The Hindu Luv Puri told us that in all of his recent speeches, Geelani has repeatedly denounced President Musharraf's statements outlining a resolution with India. Pakistani officials still meet with

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Geelani in New Delhi out of courtesy, but press reports say that Pakistan has sidelined him in recent years because of his extremist position. Geelani has long advocated violent tactics to achieve his goals in Kashmir, including telling the Pakistani press in 2003 that the Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist groups are "our friends" who "have never acted in a manner that is against humanity or morality."

¶10. (S) Although he likely has a wealth of information about terrorists in the Kashmir Valley and Pakistan, Geelani is probably of little intelligence value for the United States, since he is flush with financial assistance from his supporters and uninterested in compromising to resolve the conflict. Those close to Geelani say that he is unlikely to change his political positions, regardless of any outside influence because he has vowed to die a "martyr" for the Kashmir cause.

#### Cost/Benefit Analysis

¶11. (S) Arguments in favor of issuance/waiver include:

- He would be physically taken out of the political picture in India but he could still issue statements.
- A visa for the U.S. might make him soften his views.
- A dying man deserves such an act of compassion (South Asian cultural view).
- We might placate the Jaamat al Islami and the Hizbul Mujahideen.
- Mirwaiz will not have Geelani breathing down his neck in a delicate political moment in the Valley.
- The Valley will not erupt in sympathy for his visa denial.
- We deny Geelani yet another reason to hate and bash the U.S.
- USG employees who handle Kashmir and visit the Valley will not face additional security risks from Geelani's ilk.

¶12. (S) Arguments against issuing include:

- He will likely never change or soften his views on Kashmir or Indo-Pak peace efforts.
- Terrorists will view us as weak and willing to compromise.
- Possible uproar in the U.S. if we issue a notorious terrorist sympathizer a visa.
- Possible uproar in India if we issue a notorious terrorist sympathizer a visa.
- Kashmiris will spin harmful conspiracy theories if he dies under the surgeon's knife in the U.S.
- Is he susceptible to law enforcement interest/arrest in the U.S.?
- We risk giving him a Washington platform to spread his message of hate if he attends Fai's conference.
- Why should we give a visa to a man who detests the U.S. and India and opposes peace efforts?
- We would reinforce the distinction between rejectionists and moderates like the Mirwaiz.
- He might engage in more fund raising for FTOs, Hizbul Mujahideen, and other undesirables.

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#### Overcoming his Ineligibility

¶13. (S) Assuming that the DPT-00 hit relates to a solid 3(B) terrorism ineligibility, the Department will need to decide whether to recommend a waiver to the DHS. Based on the analysis in this message, Embassy New Delhi would not recommend such a waiver.

#### An Alternative Solution?

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¶14. (S) Advanced medical treatment necessary to prolong Geelani,s life is available in many countries in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia, and the laser treatment he seeks may well be available in Singapore. American doctors have also traveled throughout the world in the past to assist with high-profile surgeries if the local country did not have the medical staff available to provide the treatment (not that India does not possess world-class oncological facilities). Nonetheless, Geelani,s family has loudly signaled their singular desire in the Indian press to bring him to the U.S. for advanced medical care, and a U.S. denial of his visa may cause fallout in the Indian press and in Kashmir.

#### ACTION REQUESTS

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¶15. (S) ACTION for PA, S/CT, CA, and SCA: Geelani has already started attacking us in the press for delaying his visa issuance. In that sense, he has already positioned us perfectly to be the fall guy and the villain of this bit of Kashmiri political theater. There are also implications for American public diplomacy regardless of how we adjudicate Geelani,s visa application. We will need press guidance to manage the public response in India -- preferably breaking from our longstanding policy against commenting on visa applications -- if we are to deny his visa or seek to divert his care to another country. We should be given guidance that robustly defends us against attacks that will surely emanate against us in the Kashmir Valley newspapers, many of whose journalists are sympathizers of Hizbul Mujahideen and the Jemaat al Islami. We suggest:

(After he applies and we decide)

-- We denied SAS Geelani a visa because of his well known ties to terrorists, his failure to renounce violence, and his rigid and unhelpful political views.

-- We recognize that he has a serious medical condition that requires treatment. He could pursue medical treatment in other countries besides the United States, including India.

-- If Geelani endorses the peace process underway between India and Pakistan and renounces terrorism as a means of achieving his aims, we may reconsider our visa decision, as we have for other Kashmiris.

¶16. (S) ACTION FOR S/CT, SCA, CA, DS, FBI, CIA, NSC, DHS/ICE:  
We request Washington's instruction as to how to proceed

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with Geelani's visa application.

Comment: No Good Option...

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¶17. (S) Comment: Geelani has been ostracized by the USG for the past six years because of our belief that he is a terrorist sympathizer, an orchestrator of assassinations, and a known opponent of the India-Pakistan reconciliation process. If we encountered him at a function we would be required to avoid him. His poor health notwithstanding, breaking our policy of nonassociation with known terrorists and their supporters would severely compromise our international standing and credibility in the global war on terrorism.

¶18. (S) We are not immune to South Asian traditional sympathies with those known to be dying, nor do we diminish

the consequences of refusing him a visa. With extremist religious beliefs growing in the Kashmir Valley, denying Geelani his dying request will diminish our perception as helpful players in the Kashmir dispute. It will also further erode the longstanding (if unrealistic) belief among Kashmiri extremists -- propagated by Geelani -- that the United States supports their separatist aspirations. There will also certainly be political blowback among the hardliners in the Valley, and Geelani's star may rise for a while, causing others such as that of the Mirwaiz to dim. We may also put our people at further risk when they travel to the Valley.

¶19. (S) Given his rigid opposition to Indo-Pak peace efforts, it may be more useful to India to have Geelani outside of the country. As with any other Kashmiri separatist political leader, we should not believe, however, that Geelani won't engage in political activity during a stay in the United States. Denying his visa, however, will likely prompt him to denounce the United States.

...Except One: Pass the Buck Again  
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¶20. (S) Ultimately, letting him die not-so-quietly while receiving medical care elsewhere -- preferably in Singapore or some other country where he cannot engage in as much grandstanding or fundraising supported by the local Kashmiri community -- may be the best option available to try to ensure that his murderous and rejectionist legacy fades far from the spotlight into history. We recommend the Department ask Singapore to allow Geelani to enter for treatment so we do not have to host an unrepentant terrorist sympathizer on our shores. If Singapore agrees, we could quietly mention the possibility to Geelani's family, although they will surely leak that as well to the press to make us look bad.  
End Comment.

¶21. (S) We conveyed our reasoning in this cable to the British High Commission, which is also hearing from SAS Geelani that he may apply there for a visa.  
PYATT